

No farm or food processor wants their product to make a consumer ill. Unfortunately, foodborne illnesses do happen and may result in a food product recall. When a food product that has left the control of the producer is found to be unsafe, it must be removed from the marketplace to prevent potential harm. The process of removing the product is called a *recall*. It's helpful to know what farms and food businesses can do to avoid a recall altogether. And, in the unfortunate event that a product recall is necessary, it helps to have a recall plan in place to know what actions to take.

The aim of a food recall plan is to be able to identify the product(s) affected, how much product is involved, how to locate it, and how to alert customers quickly. A food recall plan can be designed in a way that will work for the farm or food business and the customers. Preparing for a food recall is part of effective crisis management and is a way to reduce risk for a business.

This fact sheet includes information on:

- Problems that lead to recalls.
- Recall planning for farm and food businesses.
- Producer responsibilities during the first 24 hours of a recall.
- WSDA and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recall contacts.

Problems that Lead to Recalls

Using best practices for on-farm food safety and food processing can reduce the likelihood of a product needing to be recalled. Unfortunately, even with the best practices, there are many things that can go wrong. A faulty piece of equipment may prevent a food product from being processed safely. An ingredient used might contain an undeclared allergen or pathogen. Product recalls may be needed for a range of reasons, including labeling errors, foreign objects found in product, food spoilage, or contamination. Many of these problems are found in routine inspections and sampling from retail businesses, conducted by WSDA's Food Safety Program or the FDA. Problems are also found when a customer reports an illness. In some cases, a business

may initiate a voluntary recall. With more severe issues, WSDA or the FDA may request or mandate a product recall.

Recall Planning for Farm and Food Businesses

A recall plan needs to be specific to the product in question. It can be designed in a way that will work for the farm and food business and their customers to remove a food product from the market quickly and effectively. Here are some general tips:

- Designate a recall contact. This person can be the owner, a manager, or someone who knows the operation well. Larger businesses may identify a recall team, assigning clear roles and responsibilities to each recall team member prior to a recall event occurring.
- While developing a recall plan, you may want to contact the WSDA Food Safety Program for assistance with procedures, standards, and wording to ensure you have an efficient and effective recall strategy.
- A good recordkeeping system is important to help identify products, codes, lots, and quantities. Lot coding or date coding is very important. Without it, the farm or food business may not have a way to differentiate between problem product and good product. Without lot coding or date coding, much more product may have to be recalled, which adds to expense.
- Be able to organize a list of customers, distributors, and accounts quickly. This list can be based on invoices, phone orders, retail store receipts, etc.
- Be sure to test your recall plan and practice this plan regularly. These are sometimes referred to as "mock recalls."

Producer Responsibilities during the First 24 Hours of a Recall

- ✓ Notify the WSDA Food Safety Program, 360-902-1876 and/or FDA recall coordinator immediately upon the decision to recall.
- ✓ Identify, isolate, and stop selling the affected product(s).
 - Consider all products that could be involved in the problem. If a problem is found in a single lot of product, be sure to include any other lots that may be affected.
- ✓ Prepare a customer distribution list. Compile a list of customers who the recalled product was shipped to. The list should identify:
 - Type of customer (CSA, distributor, manufacturer, wholesaler, retailer, retail distribution center, etc.).
 - Amount of product.
 - Shipping date.
 - Name of each customer, address, city, state, zip code, and customer contact telephone number and email address.
- ✓ Notify customers.
 - Work with a WSDA or FDA recall coordinator to develop clear and accurate messaging.
 - Alert customers of the recall, the reason for the recall, and the specific product(s) affected.
 - Include instructions to isolate and stop selling the product, and what to do with the recalled product (i.e., disposal, return to producer).
 - Clearly communicate how to identify the product(s) affected by the recall, such as by providing the lot number(s) where to locate it on the package, or other identifying product information like pictures. It can be useful to keep photos on file of product packaging, labels, placement of lot numbers, etc.
 - Instruct customers to contact the FDA recall office if the customers further manufacture, re-pack or re-label the recalled product.
 - Provide a method for the farm's or food business's accounts to contact them to confirm that the recall notice was received and that appropriate action was taken (effectiveness checks).

- ✓ Write a press release and Food Safety Notice (FSN).
 - For situations where the recalled product may pose a significant health hazard, work with WSDA and/or FDA recall coordinator to develop messaging for the public and press.
- ✓ Submit via the FDA Reportable Food Registry for Industry
 - For situations where the recalled product may pose a significant health hazard, submit a report via FDA's online Reportable Food Registry. Search for it by name at, [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov).

IMPORTANT: Destruction or reconditioning of any recalled product may require FDA or WSDA approval and supervision.



WSDA and Food and Drug Administration Recall Contacts

To contact WSDA:

WSDA Food Safety Program
Olympia, WA
360-902-1876
foodsafety@agr.wa.gov

To contact FDA:

FDA Recall Coordinator
Bothell, WA
425-302-0467
orahafwest6recalls@fda.hhs.gov

FDA's Seattle District covers Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington and should be a primary contact if you are involved in a recall.



- 23. WSDA Food Processor License and Facilities
- 24. Cottage Food Permit
- 48. Selling Read-to-Eat Foods